

By Kevin McCarthy October 14, 2011 [Link](#)

Faith in Congress is at historic lows, and to be honest, I don't blame the nearly 90 percent of Americans who are frustrated. But this week proved that where there is common ground, the House and Senate, Republicans and Democrats, can take meaningful action on policies that will help get our economy back on track. I'm talking about the passage of three Free Trade Agreements with Colombia, Panama and South Korea that create a fair playing field among America and these other nations and are estimated to create jobs and increase exports across America, including right here at home.

I know the American people can out-compete anyone in the world if the playing field is fair. See, right now American products face tariffs when they enter these countries, making them more expensive and less attractive to consumers there. With the passage of these agreements, the majority of our exports will now enter more freely – increasing the incentive for South Koreans, Colombians and Panamanians to purchase American-made goods. Exports from California's 22nd District directly support an estimated 139,627 jobs, and in 2010, local businesses exported an estimated \$44.3 billion in merchandise, according to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. These trade agreements open the door for our businesses, from agriculture to energy to manufactured goods, to export more to Asia, Central, and South America.

I am glad that the President finally submitted these agreements for approval. And I am hopeful that the bipartisan effort that moved them forward is a stepping stone to working on other areas where there is common ground.

Speaking of working together, I was able to meet one of our nation's strong allies, South Korean President Lee Myung-Bak, when he addressed a Joint Session of Congress on Thursday. From national security issues to our soon-to-be increased trade relationship, South Korea continues to be a strong democratic friend and strategic ally of the United States, and I was glad to help welcome President Lee here.

I was also honored to meet with two of the Astronauts of the Space Shuttle Atlantis this week, Commander Chris Ferguson and Colonel Rex Walheim. Colonel Walheim was actually stationed at Edwards Air Force Base for a time, and it was great to hear first-hand about their most recent mission to the International Space Station on the final flight of the Space Shuttle

program. Some folks from Bakersfield were also in Washington this week. I had lunch with Cody and Leanne Anderson and spent time with Kern County Undersheriff Rosemary Wahl.

Our community is known for its generosity and selfless service, and I wanted to thank everyone who helped at Veterans Stand Down at Stramler Park this past Thursday. I also want to wish the United States Navy a happy 236th birthday and thank the men and women at China Lake Naval Air Weapons Station in Ridgecrest and all the sailors and their families around the world for the work they have done and continue to do to ensure our nation's safety and security.